The **domestic dog** (*Canis lupus familiaris*[[3]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dog#cite_note-ADW-2) and [*Canis lupus dingo*](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Canis_lupus_dingo)[[1]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dog#cite_note-MSW3_Lupus-0)[[2]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dog#cite_note-MSW3_Dingo-1)) is a domesticated form of the [gray wolf](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gray_wolf), a member of the [Canidae](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Canidae) family of the order [Carnivora](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carnivora). The term is used for both [feral](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Feral" \o "Feral) and [pet](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pet" \o "Pet) varieties. The dog may have been the first animal to be domesticated, and has been the most widely kept [working](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Working_dog" \o "Working dog), [hunting](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hunting" \o "Hunting), and companion animal in human history. The word "dog" may also mean the male of a canine species,[[4]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dog" \l "cite_note-3) as opposed to the word "bitch" for the female of the species.[[5]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dog#cite_note-4)

Dogs were [domesticated](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Domesticated" \o "Domesticated) from gray wolves about 15,000 years ago.[[6]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dog" \l "cite_note-science2002-5) Their value to early human settlements led to them quickly becoming ubiquitous across world cultures. Dogs perform many roles for people, such as [hunting](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hunting_dog" \o "Hunting dog), [herding](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Herding_dog" \o "Herding dog), [pulling loads](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sled_dog" \o "Sled dog), [protection](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guard_dog" \o "Guard dog), [assisting police](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Police_dog" \o "Police dog) and [military](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dogs_in_warfare" \o "Dogs in warfare), [companionship](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pet" \o "Pet), and, more recently, [aiding handicapped individuals](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Service_dog" \o "Service dog). This impact on human society has given them the nickname "Man's Best Friend" in the Western world. In some cultures, dogs are also an important source of meat[[7]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dog#cite_note-6)[[8]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dog#cite_note-7). In 2001, there were estimated to be 400 million dogs in the world

[](http://www.google.es/imgres?q=perros&hl=es&gbv=2&biw=1024&bih=585&tbm=isch&tbnid=VRCHvlS22axetM:&imgrefurl=http://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Canis_lupus_familiaris&docid=q4SR_D3gN8kxUM&imgurl=http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/d/d6/GermanShep1_wb.jpg/250px-GermanShep1_wb.jpg&w=250&h=190&ei=aLUOT7LZLoLChAeLoeWUAg&zoom=1)